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SUBJECT: Embassy Science Fellows Program 2009 - U.S. Mission
Geneva

11. Subject of Proposal and General Information. U.S. Mission Geneva Environment, Science and Technology Officer in coordination with officers from the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and the Department of Health and Human Services request an Embassy Science Fellow for a short term project in Geneva, as described below:

--Topic: Risk Assessment Process Improvement at the World Health Organization
--Name of Relevant Ministry, University or Host Institution: World Health Organization
--Preferred Time Frame and Length of Fellowship: Approximately one month - September 1 to 23, 2009 proposed.
--Medical clearance not required.
--Additional Skills: Process design; database management; ability to edit and prepare scientific documents for use in the international food safety standards setting process under the CODEX Alimentarius Commission.
--Security Clearance: None required, but a Secret level clearance would be helpful in order to have access to CAA in Mission.

12. Proposal Description. The World Health Organization (WHO) is one of two parent organizations of the Codex Alimentarius (CODEX), the international standards setting body for food safety. (The other is the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.) The objective of the Risk Assessment Process Improvement project at the WHO is to provide a short-term injection of assistance to the WHO to address bottlenecks in its process to develop and make accessible to CODEX member countries risk-assessment documents and reports that provide the foundation for science-based international standards for adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The Science Fellow would perform a preliminary analysis of the WHO's system for developing and disseminating risk assessment materials and make recommendations for streamlining the process. As part of this analysis, s/he would consult with WHO staff and selected WHO Members in order to better understand concerns and priorities, and to solicit recommendations. S/he may edit and prepare specific reports that are in the WHO pipeline in order to advance consideration of certain issues in the CODEX.

13. U.S. agricultural trade interests would be greatly served by a more efficient process to handle risk assessment documentation at the WHO. Currently, risk assessment documents move slowly within the WHO bureaucracy from the drafting stage to completion and circulation to CODEX members. These documents are extremely important, as they form the basis for the CODEX standards setting process, which can often take five to ten years to complete. Bottlenecks in the WHO, therefore, create a bottleneck in the international food safety standards setting process.

14. CODEX standards have gained significance since the 1994 WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, which recognizes CODEX as one of three international standards setting bodies for agricultural products. Many countries, including many developing countries, adopt CODEX standards for domestic use while others take them into account in developing national standards. The existence of CODEX food safety standards, therefore, facilitates international trade greatly. Similarly, the absence of

CODEX standards, due in part to the slow pace of the WHO process, is frequently a serious constraint upon U.S. agricultural exports. For example, the lack of an international standard on the use of chlorine-containing compounds in cleaning and preparing poultry carcasses has kept U.S. poultry out of many international markets.

15. The Mission would like to recommend Dr. Kenneth Hinga, Office of Science and Technology Affairs, Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA, for selection as the Science Fellow. Dr. Hinga has extensive academic experience, has published numerous peer-reviewed papers, has good contacts with WHO staff, and is familiar with the CODEX process through his current position.

6 . ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT: Administrative support requirements would be minimal. FAS resources would be used for lodging and would be paid directly by the Fellow. Since the actual work would take place at the WHO, an office in the Mission and a State log-in are not required. FAS can provide a workstation for access to the FAS system, if needed. Check cashing privileges, in-country travel support, mail service, and CLO services would NOT be required. The Fellow would travel with his own cellular phone and/or Blackberry.

17. RSO/GSO CONCURRENCE: RSO and GSO concur with this proposal.

8 . CONTACT INFORMATION: EST Officer Lisa Brodey is the primary point of contact. Telephone: 41-22-749-4309; E-mail: Brodeylx@state.gov. The backup is: Senior Agricultural Attache Katherine Nishiura. Telephone: 41-22-749-5223. Email: Katherine.nishiura@fas.usda.gov.

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